

“Andrew Walker is one of the brightest lights in the evangelical church, which is why he was one of the first people I brought to EPPC. In *God and the Transgender Debate* he helps the church both understand and compassionately respond to today’s challenges on gender identity. This new edition of the book is needed now more than ever.”

RYAN T. ANDERSON, President, the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC); Author, *When Harry Became Sally*

“Biblically faithful and warmly compassionate, this is a timely resource for any offering pastoral care to those struggling with gender-identity issues. Andrew Walker provides a useful chapter for how parents should address this issue with their children, and also answers a range of commonly asked questions.”

SHARON JAMES, Social Policy Analyst, The Christian Institute, UK;
Author, *Gender Ideology: What Do Christians Need to Know?*

“The Bible tells us Jesus was full of grace and truth. In this book, Andrew Walker follows in the footsteps of the Savior. He speaks truth, but he does it with grace and love. He tackles complex issues with care, clarity, and wisdom. This will be my go-to book for those who struggle to understand this pressing issue.”

DANIEL L. AKIN, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“I am extremely grateful for Andrew Walker’s work on the transgender debate. Throughout my adult life, I have longed to see public issues addressed by Christians in ways that are articulate, intelligent, biblically orthodox, and compassionate. Andrew does exactly that in his writing and speaking. The only way forward for the church is to be faithful, honest, and loving as we subject everything to the lordship of Christ. This book can help us do that with regard to what may be the most challenging social question of our age.”

HUNTER BAKER, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Union University

“The issue of transgenderism remains hotly contested in our culture and raises a variety of questions for Christians who desire to be faithful to a biblical sexual ethic while also showing love to their transgender neighbors. Andrew Walker offers a wealth of clear, ethical thinking and pastoral sensitivity that is rooted in the authority of Scripture and insights from the best of the Christian tradition. Walker’s book is an excellent go-to resource for church staffs, church reading circles, or parents and teachers who want to think Christianly about how to navigate this issue with both conviction and compassion. Highly recommended.”

NATHAN A. FINN, Provost and Dean, North Greenville University

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION

“I have been waiting for a resource that would provide me with a clear, loving, and gospel-centered analysis on the topic of gender dysphoria, and I have finally found it. This resource will be incredibly helpful in assisting the body of Christ to be a light in today’s cultural climate.”

JACKIE HILL PERRY, Author, *Gay Girl Good God and Holier Than Thou*

“Gender-identity questions are among the most radical of our time—and the church is not prepared. Andrew T. Walker has thought deeply about these things and is an invaluable guide for faithful Christians walking through the heat and confusion of this debate.”

ROD DREHER, Author, *The Benedict Option and Live Not by Lies*

“The transgender debate is one that easily arouses passions on both sides. With gospel clarity and Christ-like compassion, Andrew Walker skillfully navigates a path between folly and cruelty. In so doing, he helps us to see why the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the transgendered. I highly commend this clearheaded and warmhearted introduction to one of the most challenging issues of our time.”

ROB SMITH, Lecturer in Ethics, Sydney Missionary and Bible College

“Andrew Walker brings a sharp mind and pastoral heart to a complex and often painful issue, and the result is a hugely helpful resource for the church today, full of wisdom, grace, and truth. I recommend it highly.”

SAM ALLBERRY, Author, *What Does God Say about Our Bodies?*

“Topics like this require a mixture of compassion and clarity, and Andrew Walker writes with both. This is a hugely helpful introduction to a complex, controversial, and often painful subject.”

ANDREW WILSON, Teaching Pastor, King’s Church London;
Author, *God of All Things*

“This book puts the hand of the suffering into the hands of the Savior, and therefore, this is the book that I will put into the hands of parents struggling to know how God’s word speaks into loving a child who struggles with gender-identity issues. In addition to its loving pastoral care and biblical family guidance, this book models how to discern the times and to respond with Christian hope.”

ROSARIA BUTTERFIELD, Author, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*
and *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*

“Christians must begin to think and speak biblically, in truth and love, about this issue. Andrew Walker has provided a steady foundation from which the church can begin to grapple with this cultural shift.”

KAREN SWALLOW PRIOR, Research Professor of English and
Christianity and Culture, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“This is exactly the book I have been longing for and praying that someone would write. Andrew T. Walker brings biblical clarity to a minefield of complexity and controversy. He sets out a clear pathway to help Christian leaders and all believers navigate tricky terrain with grace, gentleness, and genuine love for transgender people.”

JONATHAN BERRY, Director, True Freedom Trust

“What should Christians think and say about those who feel their gender is out of line with their biological sex? Should we accept that or silently acquiesce? Andrew Walker rightly says no, but in a compassionate manner that recognizes the psychological struggles and the suffering of people who experience alienation from themselves as God made them.”

ROBERT P. GEORGE, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence,
Princeton University

“This is an extremely important book, not just in Andrew Walker’s practical treatment of the tricky and confusing topic of transgenderism but in the very truthful and compassionate way he deals with it. This is really a book about how we love the gender-dysphoric person with the full grace and glorious truth of the gospel itself. It is a uniquely beautiful and very practical book. Absolutely ‘Must-Read’ material.”

GLENN T. STANTON, Director of Family Formation Studies
at Focus on the Family

“The Bible says to love your neighbor and to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. How can Christians love our transgender neighbors compassionately, without compromising our faith? Andrew Walker puts us on the right path.”

ERICK ERICKSON, Editor, *The Resurgent*

“Andrew Walker’s tender application of God’s word to our muddled lives today should make this book one of the first places to turn for Christ-like grace and truth as we seek to love all our neighbors as ourselves.”

ED SHAW, Author, *The Plausibility Problem*

“Andrew Walker offers overdue clarity, compassion, and practical wisdom on one of the most difficult questions of our day. Along the way he demonstrates not only that we need not choose between truth and love, as we are often told, but that especially on these issues of human identity, we cannot. This is such an important book.”

JOHN STONESTREET, President, the Colson Center for Christian Worldview

“We need an extra measure of wisdom and an extra measure of compassion in walking with people who struggle with their gender identity. Andrew Walker demonstrates the kind of wisdom and compassion we will need in the days ahead.”

TREVIN WAX, Author, *Rethink Your Self*

“Andrew Walker has given us a much-needed resource for understanding the questions around transgender issues. With clarity and gentleness, he calls us back to a biblical vision of humanity, creation, and gender, and invites us to see fidelity to that vision as the most loving way we can engage with a confused world.”

MIKE COSPER, Founder, Harbor Media;
Host, The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill

Andrew T. Walker

GOD
and the
TRANSGENDER
DEBATE

What Does the Bible Actually Say
about Gender Identity?

The logo for 'the goodbook COMPANY' features the text 'the goodbook' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with 'COMPANY' in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font below it. A stylized, curved line above the text suggests an open book or a wave.

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*To Matt and Carey Murphy,
who have taught both my family and their community
what it means joyfully to follow Christ in broken bodies
amid a broken creation.*

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FOREWORD

Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

The shattering velocity of moral change is one of the most shocking developments of our time. An entire moral order is collapsing, and a new moral order is being put in its place. None of this is by accident, and every dimension is part of a comprehensive revolt against creation itself.

Just consider the fact that this second edition of this book represents a quite necessary updating of an argument on sexuality and gender that is less than five years old. The updating was not made necessary by any inadequacy in the original edition. To the contrary, this new edition is made urgent by the changes to the moral landscape that have emerged in just the last half-decade and less.

The urgency of these issues makes us all the more grateful for the good work of Andrew Walker in *God and the Transgender Debate*, and for his diligent faithfulness in this new edition. This book was important in 2017. It is far more important now.

This is because the transgender revolution has now reached a critical stage, and it now touches virtually every dimension of society. The creators of entertainment are rushing to include transgender characters and actors in

their productions. School systems in the US now feature “gender identity” as a part of the curriculum for health education, premised on the claim that even young children can announce their trans identity. Even as I write this foreword, news has just come that a European nation is to authorize children as young as four years old to declare and demand a new gender identity, explicitly without the knowledge or permission of their parents.

Church congregations include families dealing with this revolution. Christian schools and colleges face demands to accommodate gender fluidity and non-binary gender identities. The arenas of the sporting world are now the focus of intense controversy over who can and cannot compete in women’s sporting events. Biological males are now being celebrated as women athletes. Those who dare to protest are dismissed as fundamentalist cranks or worse.

The sexual revolution launched with force in the 1960s was an attempt to rewrite Western civilization’s moral code. The transgender revolution, I would suggest, is an attempt to defy biology and common sense.

As Christians, we need to recognize that the transgender confusion actually points to a deeper defiance—a rejection of the Creator’s design and a repudiation of the goodness of God’s creative act. For this reason, we must discern the common testimony of both special revelation in the Scriptures and general revelation in the creation order. Andrew Walker helps to make those connections clear.

Indeed, this book is a tract for our times, and Christians need it. Churches need it. Pastors need it. All of us should read it.

Five years ago, regarding the first edition of this book, I wrote:

“The reasons why Christians must confront the transgender revolution and why we must faithfully preach the gospel to transgender persons are because we love God and we love our neighbor. The sexual revolution is a failed experiment: one that will only result in personal tragedy and cultural chaos. The church should be a place of refuge for the casualties of the sexual revolution. We must point others to the redemption and healing found in the gospel of Christ. We must be a people who look to the gospel as we await the redemption of all things—including gender and sexuality—and the fulfillment of all of God’s promises in Christ Jesus.”

Andrew has written this second edition not merely to explain the transgender challenge and to uphold biblical truth but to point us all to the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is a cherished colleague who has written this book out of concern, but even more deeply out of love for Christ, for the church, and for human beings made in God’s image, by God’s design, for God’s purpose. Readers will share my gratitude for this author and this book.

*Louisville, Kentucky
August 31, 2021*

1. HE HAD COMPASSION

Jesus debated issues. But much more than that, he loved people.

All kinds of people came to speak with him during his time on earth. The religious insiders. The socially excluded. The handicapped. The undesirables. The rich, the poor, the young, the old. Those whose lives had been messed up by others, and those whose lives had been messed up by themselves.

And Jesus loved them all, made time for them all, and respected them all. He didn't always agree with them (and he disagreed with the religious insiders more than anyone). But he always loved them—especially those who came to him hurting. In a lovely phrase taken from the prophet Isaiah and applied to himself, Jesus described his approach to them:

*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick
he will not quench. (Matthew 12:20)*

The visual imagery Jesus uses is important to remember and beautiful to see. Jesus will not let fragile people

crumble or collapse beneath the weight of their struggles. Jesus wants to take those who feel they are close to flickering out and help return them to brightness and joy. Jesus is tender and gentle toward those who think they cannot go any further.

He described life with him as “rest,” and invited the burdened to come and enjoy it:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28-30)

So if you're reading this close to your breaking point, if you're feeling that your spark is very, very dim or that you're too broken to stand—or if you know someone who is in that situation—Jesus says, *I get that. I see that. I love you, and I want to help. I may not always agree with you, but I will only disagree with you because I want the best for you. I've come to stiffen you, not to snap you. I don't snuff out flickering candles. I want to fan them into flames.*

Jesus loved people. That's important for me to remember as I write a book with the word “debate” in its title. And it's good for you to remember as you read a book with the word “transgender” in its title. Because at its heart, this debate isn't about a debate. It's about people: precious people made in the image of God who are hurting, who are confused, who are angry, who are scared, who may have been told by their family that they are unwelcome. It's about some people who are delighted with how culture has shifted when it comes to gender identity, and other people who are concerned about how culture has shifted.

What would Jesus do? He would listen to us, and he

would love us, and when he disagreed with us, it would always and only be out of compassion, never oppression. There is no hurting person he would mock, or shun, or insult, or sneer at. He is so determined to pursue what is best for all of us that he died—excluded, mocked and rejected—to secure it.

If this isn't the Jesus you have heard of, then I'm sorry. It is the Jesus who I seek to live with and for. And it is the Jesus whose words you'll hear in this book as we take a careful look at what the Bible really says about gender identity, and what that means for people who experience uncertainty or struggles with their gender identity; for those who love those who experience those struggles; and for churches who are (or should be) seeking to support those who experience gender-identity conflicts.

WHY THIS BOOK?

I'm writing this book because there's a revolution happening in Western culture that is exploding our assumptions and traditions of what it means to be a man or a woman. It is a revolution that gets to the very essence of what it means to be human.

This revolution is flipping over the tables of centuries-old norms. And there's some good that can come from it. It is good, for example, that people who experience distress about their gender identity are able to talk more openly and honestly about their struggles and feelings without everyone in society thinking they are a freak. Society is now attempting to help people who experience doubts and struggles with their gender identity, rather than push those people to the margins.

With that revolution comes a debate—a debate about what it means, if anything, to be a man or a woman. In

this debate, there are many voices. Some are loud; many are quiet. Some are unfair and strident, from a variety of perspectives. Others are measured and kind, from a variety of positions. Some are well-represented in the media, and others struggle to be heard.

I think it's important that God's voice is heard in this debate. Why? Because, as Psalm 100:3 states, "It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." That's what this book is about. It is not a medical or psychological study, nor is it a statistical analysis or a political manifesto. It's aiming, as clearly as possible, to let God's voice be heard regarding who we are as his creatures.

This is a book for busy, thoughtful people who want to consider what the Bible says about transgenderism, how that applies to situations they'll likely face, and, possibly, what that means for the struggles they or their loved ones are experiencing now. I'm writing for you if you want to learn more, love better, and are open to considering what God has to say about sex and gender in his word.

The only assumption taken in this book, and an assumption I'd ask you to be open to if you do not already subscribe to it, is that the Bible is God's word. Maybe you accept that truth; maybe you do not. But it is worth taking a look at every available resource to see what guidance it has for such a difficult, painful, emotive issue. And so the only favor I ask is that you read this book right through and see it as a whole. This is a hard issue, and it is not a simple one. Each chapter is, in many ways, reliant on other chapters, and no one chapter says everything that I think needs to be said.

Here's where we're heading. Next we'll walk through three short introductory chapters, to gain a grasp of how we've gotten to where we are as a culture, what it means to

be transgender, and why and how people reach such different positions in this debate.

In chapters 5 to 7, we will examine what the Bible says about humanity, and therefore about gender.

Chapters 8 to 11 ground that in the real lives of ordinary people:

- what this means for those who wish to love transgender neighbors
- what Jesus says to those who experience gender dysphoria or who identify as transgender
- how Jesus challenges local churches to show compassion to every person that enters our churches, regardless of who they are and what they think, while also taking seriously the truth of God's word
- how parents might speak to their children about gender identity.

At the end, there is a chapter of answers to important questions that the previous chapters haven't dealt with, and a chapter asking some questions of the "transgender movement."

There's one more reason I've written this book: I'd love for the church not to be constantly playing catch-up in the culture. We shouldn't let it always be the case that the church addresses an issue only when the broader culture takes it up first. Christians lagged behind, for example, in showing a compassionate grace-and-truth response to homosexuality. Some of us forgot about truth. Most of us forgot about grace.

I pray that this won't happen again when it comes to gender identity. When it comes to speaking truth, showing compassion, and seeking justice, the church should be leading, not following. I hope this book is a contribution to that cause.

This book is not the last word on the subject or the last word in this debate. It won't satisfy every objection or answer every question. It's a start, not a finish.

In Matthew's Gospel we read of Jesus that...

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (9:36)

Using Jesus as my example and my guide, I hope to offer in this book a compassionate way forward; a way that is different and, I believe, offers greater hope than many of the other voices in this debate. I hope it is helpful to you, even as and when it is provocative. My greatest prayer above all is that, if and when what you read is hard to hear, you will remember that the God who speaks to you in the Bible is the same God who loves you so much that he came, lived, and even died to strengthen bruised reeds and fan flickering flames.